

## “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” Is a Poor Way to Generate Referrals

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Building a solid referral network cuts down on the amount of effort needed to turn prospects into paying clients. For starters, leads that come through referrals are already “qualified” (i.e. they have demonstrated an interest in purchasing your legal services). Similarly, individuals who come to you through a referral are already inclined to trust you. If you trust your accountant and you need a lawyer, you are likely to follow his or her recommendation.

Converting referrals into paying clients is the easy part. The hard work, of course, is getting the “right” referrals in the first place.

Making an effort to build relationships with likely referral sources (i.e. other professionals who serve the same clients) is a good place to start. There are a myriad of ways to do this and [I’ve written](#) about this before. Making [your own referrals](#) is probably the most effective way to build your referral relationships.

But relationship building alone is not enough. As lawyers, we don’t like to “sell” so our inclination is to do a good job and hope that the work or the referrals will come.

Failure to “ask” for referrals and failure to “tell” referral sources what kinds of referrals we want is probably the biggest sales mistake that we all make.

So what is a shy lawyer to do? Start with relationship building; but after you have invested in your referral network, do not be afraid to ask for help. Ask your contacts what you can do to get

them to refer clients your way. Tell other professionals in your network who you want to meet and what kinds of problems you can solve. Be specific. Be known for certain types of work.

By promoting your reputation in a narrowly defined way, you will greatly increase the chances that your referral sources will remember you when a good prospect comes along. Tell your referral sources what to look for (whether it is individuals who are having marital problems, companies that are concerned that their trademarks are being stolen on the internet or family owned businesses that want to be acquired).

In short, building a strong referral network does take time and should not be forced or rushed. But once you have solidified your relationships, don't be afraid to ask for the referrals you want. If you are not asking, you can be certain of one thing: someone else is!